



Irish Research: Importance and Use of Census Substitutes!

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Introduction

The focus of this four-part course is to learn about census substitutes and the critical role they play in Irish research. The four topics of discussion are: What are census substitutes and why are they critical to Irish research? What are the key census substitute records and why are they critical to Irish research? What are the key census substitute records and where are they found? What other census substitute records are there? What is the research strategy for using them?

What are Census Substitutes?

To understand what a census substitute is, it helps to understand what a census is. A census is a count and description of the population of an area. When available, census records can provide names, ages, occupations, marital statuses, birthplaces, and family members' relationships. A census may list only selected people for a special reason (such as males between the ages of 16 and 45 for military purposes), the whole population or they may just population counts. The percentage of people listed depends on the purpose of the census and on how careful the enumerator was. We most often think of censuses in terms of a general population census that was taken every 10 years and collected the names, ages, and birthplaces, among other things, of the entire population.

When these general population census records fail to exist, records that act as census substitutes can be extremely helpful. A census substitute is often simply a list of some people living in an area collected for some reason. Examples of these include tax records for poor relief, support of the state church, religious censuses, and poll books to record eligible voters. Lists of men ages 16-45 might be compiled to indicate military readiness.

“Learn More” Activity

To learn about some of the existing Ireland census substitutes, go to the website Irish Genealogy Toolkit “Ireland census substitutes”:

<http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/ireland-census-substitutes.html>

and to Ancestry Solutions’ “Census – Irish Census Substitutes”:

<http://www.ancestrysolutions.com/referencecentre/refcharts/Census%20Ireland%20Sb.html> and read about the substitutes listed there.

Why Census Substitutes?

General populations censuses in Ireland were taken beginning in 1821, then every ten years to 1911. A 1921 Census was not taken because of the government strife in Ireland which ultimately led to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland separating in 1922. The Republic

of Ireland has since taken censuses in 1926, 1936, 1946, 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1979, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2002 and 2006.

Unfortunately, the 1821-1851 censuses were mostly burned in the Public Record Office fire at the Four Courts government complex in Dublin in 1922. Government order deliberately destroyed the 1861-1871 censuses shortly after they were taken and the 1881-1891 censuses were converted to paper pulp during World War I likely because of a paper shortage. Only fragments of the 1821-1851 Censuses survive and indexes can be found at the www.nationalarchives.ie website as well as on other major family history websites.

Because of major record loss, census substitutes are needed to support research conclusions.

“Learn More” Activities

A good, brief article on the destruction of records June 30th, 1922 at the Four Courts government complex can be found at the Irish Times web page:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/ruin-of-public-record-office-marked-loss-of-great-archive-1.1069843>

Also, read the excellent FamilySearch Wiki article titled “Ireland Census and Census Substitutes (National Institute)”:

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Census_and_Census_Substitutes_\(National_Institute\)](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Census_and_Census_Substitutes_(National_Institute)).

Key Census Substitutes

To begin your search of Ireland census substitutes, it is best to start by going to the FamilySearch Wiki at <http://wiki.familysearch.org>. Use the search box to search for “Ireland Census Substitutes”.

When using census substitutes in Ireland, most start with Griffith’s Valuation and the Tithe Applotment records. Both are 19th Century tax records though the tax was for different reasons.

Griffith’s Valuation

Griffith’s Valuation was a tax assessed between 1848 and 1864 depending on where you were living. This tax helped determine everyone’s liability for paying the poor rate (support of the poor). The tax was assessed in southern counties first and finished in the north. Not all were taxed every year as is customary now. The valuation records list the name of the head of the household, the name of the landowner (‘immediate lessor’), the acreage of the plot, the value of the property, and the amount of tax assessed. If someone rented more than one plot of land in an area, they may appear in the record more than once. As the years passed, about every ten years, the valuation of an assessed piece of land could be revised and notes made in the Valuation Revision books.

Key websites with indexes and images to the Griffith’s Valuation include:

- Ancestry.com: <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>
- AskAboutIreland.ie: <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>
- FailteRomhat.com: <http://www.failteromhat.com/griffiths.php>
- findmypast.com: <http://search.findmypast.com/search-world-records/griffiths-valuation-1847-1864>
- Northern Ireland Valuation Revision Books: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/search-archives-online/valuation-revision-books>
- The National Archives of Ireland Valuation Office books 1824-1856: <http://census.nationalarchives.ie/search/vob/home.jsp>

Tithe Applotment

The Tithe Applotment was a “tax” or tithe assessed to occupiers of over one acre of productive land and compiled between 1823 and 1837. This tithe was to support the state Church of Ireland so Catholics were reluctant to pay it. Because of the acreage requirement, it is less likely to include those from urban areas unless they had land out in the country. The tithe applotment provides only the names of heads of household, not everyone. It also includes acreage using the Irish or Plantation measure, and perhaps a note on the quality of the land. Also, the jurisdictions used are the civil parishes tied closely to Church of Ireland parish boundaries. More information is at <http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/aboutmore.jsp>

Key websites with indexes and images to the Tithe Applotment include:

- National Archives of Ireland The Tithe Applotment Books:
<http://titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/search/tab/home.jsp>
- FamilySearch.org Ireland Tithe Applotment Books, 1814-1855:
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1804886>
- Ancestry.com Ireland, Tithe Applotment Books, 1823-1837:
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1270>

“Learn More” Activities

To learn more about Griffith’s Valuation, read the article at Irish Genealogy Toolkit. A map of the years each county was taxed is included along with good detail: <http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/Griffiths-Valuation.html> also be sure to click on the link to information on the Valuation Books on a separate page: <http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/valuation-books.html>

Next, choose two of the websites with indexes and images of the Griffith’s Valuation records, try the same search at both websites and learn the information contained there. AskAboutIreland.ie is an excellent one to start with (<http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/>).

Lastly, do the same search in two of the Tithe Applotment websites and read a great article on the JohnGrenham.com website called Tithe Applotment Books: https://www.johngrenham.com/browse/retrieve_text.php?text_contentid=65

More Census Substitutes

The “Learn More” activity in the “What Are Census Substitutes?” section above has some great lists for other census substitutes. There is also a good list at the FamilySearch Wiki in the article titled “Ireland Census Substitutes”: https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Census_Substitutes. Some other census substitutes that have reasonably broad coverage are:

- Civil Survey: The Civil Survey was taken from 1654 - circa 1660. It was a survey of the holdings of landowners, their titles and tenures of their estates. Twenty-seven counties were included in the survey covering the provinces of Ulster, Leinster, Munster and a portion of Connaught.
- The Pender "Census" of 1659: This "census" was probably taken during Petty's survey between December 1654 and the year 1659. It details the names of the large estate owners and the numbers of Protestants and Catholics in each parish. The original clan names are also noted with the numbers of individuals of that surname.
- Hearth Money Rolls: Initiated in 1662, the Hearth Tax was collected and recorded on Hearth Money Rolls within the Court of the Exchequer. They were collected throughout the decade of the 1660's as a result of the Hearth Money Act of 1662 and additional amending legislation. For additional information, see Ireland Taxation - Hearth Tax in the FamilySearch Wiki.
- Protestant Householder’s Lists of 1740: This collection captured some of the protestant heads of household in parts of Counties Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Donegal and

Tyrone. The original was destroyed in the 1922 fire but transcripts survived. Parts are at the various archives around Ireland.

- Religious Census Returns, 1766: In March and April 1766, the government ordered Church of Ireland rectors to compile complete returns of all householders in their parishes, showing their religion, particularly any Roman Catholic clergy. The instructions were inconsistently followed with some simply providing numerical totals and others detailing all householders with their addresses. Some are reportedly complete for the parish and some are partial. The original returns were lost in 1922, but extensive transcripts survive for some areas. These were microfilmed by FamilySearch and those films have now been digitized.
- Spinning Wheel Premium Lists 1796: To increase the production of linen and the linen trade in 1796, Parliament began subsidizing the flax industry by providing spinning wheels and reels to qualified flax growers. The names provided in these lists provide an excellent snapshot for a time period known for its lack of records. Records for the counties of Dublin and Wicklow do not appear to have survived. There is an index to these records that was produced by All-Ireland Heritage in 1986.
- Return of Owners of Land 1876: This has recorded 32,614 owners of land of one acre or more in Ireland, identifying them by province and county, and giving their address along with the extent and valuation of their property.
- Old Age Irish Pension Records: When the Irish government began to provide old age pensions in 1908, applicants were required to provide proof of their age but most were born before the government began registering births in 1864. Therefore, extracts from the 1841 and 1851 censuses were accepted as proof of age. These extracts constitute a small substitute for the lost census.

Few of these are currently online however that could change quickly. Also, any given locality can have name lists made for various reasons, such as muster rolls or church rates. Use the FamilySearch Catalog (<https://familysearch.org/catalog/search>) or an internet search engine to find out more information and to learn how a list may be searched.

“Learn More” Activities

Read the information on Irish census substitutes at the John Grenham.com website Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Irish Census Substitutes:

https://www.johngrenham.com/browse/retrieve_text.php?text_contentid=22 then click “Next” at the bottom of the article to read about the eighteenth and nineteenth century lists.

Next, choose two of the above census substitutes and do a search for it on the internet to learn more about it and how you might get access.

Census Substitutes Strategy

Because of record loss or records simply being kept, the research strategy for Ireland is different than in many places.

Known Locality

If you know your ancestor was from a specific place in Ireland search for and locate every record you can find related to that area that may possibly mention your ancestor or your ancestor’s family.

- Extract records of your family name from church records, Roman Catholic and Protestant, civil registration if extant, records of the poor, probate indexes, deeds, and estate records along with census substitutes.
 - Valuation revision books can be used to show land being transferred from one generation to the next.

- Weave the extracted records together to try and create a “picture” of the family in the parish

Census substitutes are part of a larger research plan. Think of the locality like a crime scene. You want to gather every scrap of evidence hoping to build a case that will convict a “suspect” of being your ancestor.

Unknown Locality

If you don’t know where in Ireland your ancestor is from, most likely additional research is needed in the country they arrived in. If you believe you’ve searched every possible record in the country they emigrated to, consider the following list:

Banking records	Naturalization*
Biographies*	Newspapers—local, trade, religious, etc.
Business /Employment records	Obituaries/Anniversary notices*
Cemetery/Sexton records	Orphanage records
Census (all years they were alive) *	Passenger lists (after 1890 these deserve an *)
Church records*	Pension records
Compiled collections	Periodicals
County histories	Poorhouse/Workhouse and Poor Law records
Court records	Probate records
Family records*	School/University records
Family histories	Social Security applications
Fraternal organizations/clubs	Tombstone Inscriptions*
Funeral home records	Vital records (check children of immigrant, too) *
Institutional records (i.e., hospital)	
Insurance records	
Land records	
Military records*	

Be sure to search these records for your ancestors, their children, and any known siblings. These searches are much more likely to be productive than any search in Ireland.

Census substitutes can help locate a place in Ireland if all else fails if used as evidence of the surname in a particular area. If known family includes more than one surname, perhaps a husband and wife who married before leaving Ireland, and her maiden name is known, the surnames can be cross-referenced in census substitutes to find locations where the names are found in the same locality.

“Learn More” Activity

First, go to JohnGrenham.com (www.johngrenham.com), on main screen, type in one of your Irish surnames in the “Your surname” box then click “Search”. This search uses the Griffith’s Valuation to identify where the surname is found in Ireland between 1847 and 1864. Note the surname variations in the column on the left and the counties where the name is more common down below the map. Start over and do this for another surname and find out where the surnames come together.

Next, go to www.askaboutireland.com and search Griffith’s valuation for the two surnames in a county where the two names are found and look for common parishes and townlands.